

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM

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- ☐ 13911 Park Ave. - Victorville, CA 92392 - (760) 243-3773
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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY STILL FREE OF WEST NILE VIRUS

San Bernardino County Vector Control Program is prepared to respond to mosquito-borne diseases, as well as West Nile Virus, should they appear in this county. West Nile Virus has not yet been found in San Bernardino County although extensive surveillance has been conducted during the last 2 years. The virus has, however, been found in Los Angeles County and in Imperial and Riverside Counties in the Salton Sea area. Since its first detection in the United States in 1999 in New York City, WNV has been found in 44 states and the District of Columbia.

West Nile Virus is a disease primarily spread by mosquitoes among birds and incidentally to people, horses and other animals. Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.

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The majority of people who get infected with WNV will not experience any illness. Only a few will experience mild symptoms, such as fever, headache and body aches. West Nile Virus infection, however, causes severe disease in the elderly and individuals with lowered immune system.

A comprehensive surveillance program to monitor for WNV in San Bernardino County has been established by the San Bernardino County Vector Control Program in collaboration with the California Department of Health Services, University of California at Davis, and other state and local agencies. The program includes testing suspect cases in humans and horses, collecting and testing mosquitoes, testing sentinel chicken flocks placed strategically around the county and evaluating dead birds. It is important to test chickens and dead birds since they become infected with WNV by being bit by infected mosquitoes. Thus, the sentinel chickens may signal the presence of WNV in the area.

The public can get involved in the WNV monitoring effort by reporting any crows, ravens, magpies or jays that may have died in the last 24 hours to the county toll-free number at 800-44-ABATE or to the state at 877-WNV-BIRD. “Good Samaritans” calling in should take note of the dead bird’s location and condition before calling for further instructions. The dead bird should have no signs of decomposition or maggot infestation. While there is no evidence that handling dead birds can result in being infected with WNV, individuals should not attempt to catch or handle sick or dead birds. If you must handle dead birds use gloves and put the carcass in two plastic bags. Tissues from dead birds are tested for the presence of WNV. In fact, WNV was most often identified first in dead birds, especially crows, in other regions of the country.

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It is important that County residents understand how to protect themselves from mosquitoes and West Nile Virus so they can continue enjoying outdoor activities. County residents can reduce the risk of mosquito-transmitted diseases by following these precautions:

- Avoid mosquito infested areas from dawn to dusk
- When outdoors, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts and other protective clothing.
- Use insect repellents according to label instructions.
- Make sure that doors and windows in homes have tight fitting and unbroken screens.
- Do not allow water to sit in old tires, flowerpots, trash, swimming pools, birdbaths, pet bowls, etc.
- Keep your swimming pools clean and chlorinated
- Stock garden ponds with mosquito fish; they eat both mosquito eggs and larvae.

If there is a significant mosquito problem where you live, if you would like to get free mosquito fish from our Program or you would like to report a dead bird call San Bernardino County Vector Control Program at 800-44-ABATE (800-442-2283) or 909-388-4600.